

ROTARY DEFLECTOR, OPTICAL SCANNING UNIT AND IMAGE FORMING APPARATUS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention:

The present invention relates to a rotary deflector, an optical scanning unit and an image forming apparatus for use in a laser printer, a digital copier and the like.

Related Art:

An optical scanning unit is provided with a driving motor for rotating a polygon mirror at high speed. However, it is unable to realize a high image quality because optical parts vibrate, scanning position deviates periodically and nonuniformity of pitch occurs on an image unless vibration caused by the driving motor is reduced. Still more, noise may be generated when a housing of the optical scanning unit resonates with a base of the image forming apparatus.

In order to eliminate such a problem, Japanese Patent Laid-Open No. Hei. 5-264916 has disclosed a method of controlling the resonating condition of the housing by changing fixing points of the base and the housing of the image forming apparatus per type of machine or by increasing/reducing a mass element to be added to the housing, to avoid the resonance frequency of the housing in correspondence to changes of vibrating frequency of a source of vibration.

However, there has been a problem that when the fixing points of the housing are changed, the position of a laser beam fluctuates and the image quality degrades because the amount and the mode of deformation of the housing change.

The driving motor for rotating the polygon mirror is arranged so as to switch the rotational speed during the standby state and the image forming time to reduce

power consumption and to switch the rotational speed corresponding to an image density in order to accommodate to plural image densities (resolutions).

However, because the above-mentioned prior arts have had no arrangement of reducing the vibration of the vibrating source itself, there has been a problem that when the rotational speed is changed, the vibrating frequency of the driving motor approaches to the vibrating frequency of the housing, thus resonating and causing noise.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention has been made in order to solve the above-mentioned problem and reduces noises and stabilizes the image quality by reducing vibration of the image forming apparatus by reducing vibration of the driving source itself within a preset frequency range without changing the resonating condition of the housing.

According to an aspect of the invention, a mass member is attached to a non-driving section of a driving motor for rotating a polygon mirror. It then becomes possible to avoid the resonance and to reduce vibration and noise by moving a resonance point by adding the mass member to the non-driving section.

For instance, it is possible to reduce the noise by attaching the mass member to a stationary shaft which is located at the center of rotation of the driving motor and which is considered to be the non-driving section.

The specific nature of the invention, as well as other objects, uses and advantages thereof, will clearly appear from the following description and from the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Preferred embodiments of the present invention will be described in detail based on the following figures, wherein:

FIG. 1 is a plan view showing an optical scanning unit provided with a rotary deflector of a first embodiment;

FIG. 2 is an exploded perspective view of the rotary deflector according to the first embodiment;

FIG. 3 is a sectional view of the rotary deflector of the first embodiment;

FIG. 4 is a plan view of the rotary deflector of the first embodiment;

FIG. 5 is a graph showing the relationship between vibration of a base and noise;

FIG. 6 is a graph showing the vibration level of a driving motor when no mass member is attached;

FIG. 7 is a graph showing the vibration level of the driving motor when the mass member is attached;

FIG. 8 is a graph showing the vibration level of the housing when no mass member is attached;

FIG. 9 is a graph showing the vibration level of the housing when the mass member is attached;

FIG. 10 is a graph showing the vibration level of the base when no mass member is attached;

FIG. 11 is a graph showing the vibration level of the base when the mass member is attached;

FIG. 12 is a graph showing the vibration level of the base when a quantity of unbalance of the driving motor is increased and no mass member is attached;

FIG. 13 is a graph showing the vibration level of the base when a quantity of unbalance of the driving motor is increased and the mass member is attached;

FIGS. 14A through 14F are graphs showing the relationship between the mass of the mass member and the vibration level of the base;

FIG. 15 is a plan view of a rotary deflector according to a second embodiment;

FIG. 16 is a sectional view of the rotary deflector of the second embodiment;

FIG. 17A is a plan view showing a modified example in which the balance of weight of the mass member is changed and FIG. 17B is a sectional view showing the modified example in which the balance of weight of the mass member is changed;

FIG. 18A is a plan view showing a modified example in which the balance of weight of the mass member is changed and FIG. 18B is a sectional view showing the modified example in which the balance of weight of the mass member is changed;

FIG. 19A is a plan view showing a modified example in which the balance of weight of the mass member is changed and FIG. 19B is a sectional view showing the modified example in which the balance of weight of the mass member is changed;

FIG. 20 is a perspective view showing the modified example in which the balance of weight of the mass member is changed;

FIG. 21A is a plan view showing a modified example in which the balance of weight of the mass member is changed and FIG. 21B is a sectional view showing the modified example in which the balance of weight of the mass member is changed;

FIG. 22 is a graph showing the relationship between weight balance of the mass member and the vibration level of the base;

FIG. 23 is a graph showing the relationship between the mass of the mass member and the resonance point;

FIG. 24 is a graph showing the relationship between the position of center of

gravity and the resonance frequency of the base;

FIG. 25 is a plan view of a rotary deflector according to a third embodiment;

FIG. 26 is a sectional view of the rotary deflector of the third embodiment;

FIG. 27 is a plan view of the rotary deflector of the third embodiment;

FIG. 28 is a graph showing the relationship between the mass member and the chattering noise;

FIG. 29 is a plan view of the rotary deflector of the fourth embodiment; and

FIG. 30 is a sectional view of the rotary deflector of the fourth embodiment.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

An optical scanning unit provided with a rotary deflector of a first embodiment will be explained below with reference to the drawings.

(Schematic Structure of Optical Scanning Unit)

As shown in FIGs. 1 through 4, a housing 16 of the optical scanning unit 14 is formed of synthetic resin and is attached to a base 18 of an image forming apparatus by four fixing screws 12. The fixing points of the fixing screws 12 are always fixed and are not shifted depending on types of machine. Therefore, the amount and the mode of deformation of the housing 16 restricted by the fixing screws 12 are uniform and the position of the laser beam does not fluctuate per type of machine, thus causing no degradation of image quality.

An upper opening of the housing 16 is almost closed by a cover (not shown) and optical parts are stored in the concealed space.

In the optical system including such optical parts, a laser beam emitted out of a laser diode 10 is collimated by a collimator lens 18, shaped by a slit 20, reflected by a reflecting mirror 22 and arrives at a polygon mirror 24 composing a rotary deflector 31

attached to the stationary shaft 44, by causing the center of gravity of the mass member 72 to coincide with the center of axis of the stationary shaft 44.

The mass member 72 may also be inserted into the hollow section of the stationary shaft 44 instead of fixing it at the head 48 of the stationary shaft 44.

FIG. 5 shows the relationship between the vibration level of the base 18 and noise when the optical scanning unit 14 in which the mass member 72 (mass: 50 g) is attached to the stationary shaft 44 is mounted on the base 18 of the image forming apparatus. Here, the value of vibration (mV) is what acceleration is transformed into voltage and $1000 \text{ mV} = 9.8 \text{ m/s}^2$ (acceleration).

While the vibration of the base 18 is caused by transmission of an exciting force due to unbalance of the driving motor 30 via the housing 16 of the optical scanning unit 14, the sound pressure level may be lowered to 52 dB or less and noise may be reduced by reducing the value of vibration to 50 mV or less.

It is thus possible to reduce the level of vibration and to reduce the noise by avoiding the resonance by moving the resonance point by attaching the mass member 72 to the stationary shaft 44 of the driving motor 30 in this embodiment.

FIGs. 6 and 7 show the result of comparison of vibration levels in the case where the mass member 72 is not attached and in the case where it is attached. The vibration in the vertical direction (the thrust direction of the stationary shaft 44) was measured at the fixing section of the base plate 38 of the rotary deflector 31 as the measuring point.

Then, the vibration level was measured by changing the rotational speed of the driving motor 30 from 250 Hz to 400 Hz. As a result, while the vibration level was 300 mV when there was no mass member as shown in FIG. 6 when the rotational speed was 340 Hz in forming an image, it was reduced to 65 mV when the mass

member was attached. Thus, it was possible to prevent noise from occurring in switching the speed of the rotary deflector.

The image forming apparatus of this embodiment is a printer which is adaptable to two kinds of resolution of 600 DPI and 480 DPI. The rotational speed of the polygon mirror 24 in printing in 600 DPI is 340 cycles per second and the rotational speed of the polygon mirror 24 in printing in 480 DPI is 272 cycles per second. Graphs in FIGs. 8 and 9 show the result in the range of rotational speed in use (272 Hz to 340 Hz). When the vibration at the center of the housing 16 was measured, the vibration level was reduced to 10 mV when the mass member was attached as compared to the case of 60 mV in maximum when no mass member was attached.

FIGs. 10 and 11 show the comparison of vibration levels of the base 18. The measuring point was the center of four fixing points where the housing 16 shown in FIG. 1 is fixed by the fixing screws 12. While the vibration level was 340 mV in maximum when no mass member was attached, it was reduced to 20 mV when the mass member was attached.

The unbalance of the driving motor 30 used in the rotary deflector of this embodiment conforms to a specification requiring G2 (JISB0905: grade of balance of rotary device).

FIGs. 5 through 11 show the results of measuring the unbalance of the driving motor 30 confirmed on the level of G2. Graphs in FIGs. 12 and 13 show the results of measuring the vibration of the base 18 when the degree of unbalance of the driving motor 30 is intentionally increased to G6.

According to this measured result, while the vibration level was 680 mV in maximum when no mass was attached, it was reduced to 20 mV or less when the mass

member was attached and the unbalance was reduced to the level of G2. Thus, the vibration does not change due to a drift of balance, so that it is possible to realize low vibration design in a short time, improving the reliability.

Although most of the unbalance of the driving motor of mass-produced products is normally controlled in the level of G1 through G3, it is possible to considerably relax balance specifications, to reduce balancing processes and to reduce the cost considerably.

Next, the relationship between the mass of the mass member and the resonance frequency will be explained.

The resonance point moves downward stepwise, as shown in FIG. 14A in which the resonance point is 400 Hz when no mass member is attached, in FIG. 14B in which the resonance point is 220 Hz when the mass member is 25 g, in FIG. 14C in which the resonance point is 155 Hz when the mass member is 50 g, in FIG. 14D in which the resonance point is 140 Hz when the mass member is 65 g, in FIG. 14E in which the resonance point is 130 Hz when the mass member is 75 g, and in 14F in which the resonance point is 110 Hz when the mass member is 85 g.

Thus, it becomes possible to achieve optimal tuning to lower the vibration per type of machine and to be readily adaptable to other type machines just by selecting the mass of the mass member.

FIGs. 15 and 16 show a rotary deflector of a second embodiment.

A mass member 80 is formed of a rectangular iron plate. An attaching hole 82 formed at the center of gravity of the plate is inserted into the head 48 of the long screw 46 and is fixed by the fixing screw 68. Hook pieces 80A are bent downward at both ends of the mass member 80 in the longitudinal direction and are positioned between ribs 84 for reinforcing the housing 16. Even if the fixing screw 68 for fixing

the mass member 80 becomes loose due to vibration, the ribs 84 intervene the hook pieces 80A to stop the rotation of the mass member 80 structurally.

It is noted that while a spring washer 77 is used as a measure for preventing the fixing screw 8 from being loosened, a hook 80A is also provided so that it hits against a rib 84 and stops rotation of the mass member, thus damaging no other optical parts, even when it so happens that the mass member 80 is loosened while shipping the image forming apparatus. Further, because the degree of rotation before hitting against the rib 84 is very small and the pressure of the spring washer 77 is fully high, it is possible to keep the stable state unless an abnormality occurs.

When the mass member 80 of 75 g is attached to a copying machine whose resolution is 600 DPI, rotational speed of the rotary deflector is 340 rps and rotational speed during the standby state is 170 rps, it is possible to reduce vibration of 170 Hz to 340 Hz.

Next, the relationship between the weight balance of the mass member and the vibration level of the base will be explained.

In a mass member 86 shown in FIG. 17, the ratio of weight of an area (hatched part) of 35 mm x 35 mm centering on an attachment hole 88 to the whole mass of 75 g is set at 33 %. In a mass member 90 shown in FIG. 18, a thin plate 90B is pasted at the center part to set the ratio of weight of the area of 35 mm x 35 mm centering on the attachment hole 88 to the whole mass of 75 g at 46 %.

In a mass member 92 shown in FIG. 19, a plate member 92B is pasted at the center part to set the ratio of weight of the area of 35 mm x 35 mm centering on the attachment hole 88 to the whole mass of 75 g at 57 %. In a mass member 94 shown in FIGs. 20 and 21, a thick plate 96 is pasted at the center part to set the ratio of weight of the area of 35 mm x 35 mm centering on the attachment hole 88 to the whole mass

of 75 g at 66 % to concentrate the weight further.

It is thus possible to reduce the vibration level of the base 18 by concentrating the ratio of weight of the mass member on the axial center of the stationary shaft as it may be judged from a graph shown in FIG. 22. It is noted that this experimental result shows maximum values in the range of the rotational frequency in use of 170 Hz to 340 Hz and the vibration level is stabilized by concentrating the weight ratio to 46 % or more. However, when the weight ratio is concentrated up to 57 %, no problem occurs even when there is dispersion (3 % in maximum) due to mass-production. It is noted that the mass members 86, 90, 92 and 94 are provided with hooks 86A, 90A, 92A and 94A whose rotation is stopped by the rib 84 of the housing 16.

FIG. 23 shows the relationship between the mass of the mass member and the resonance point.

As it is apparent from FIG. 23, the dispersion of the resonance point of the base 18 is reduced to 20 Hz or less and the effect of the present invention may be brought about by increasing the mass of the mass member to 5 g or more.

FIG. 24 shows the relationship between the gravitational position of the mass member acting in the axial direction of the driving motor and the resonance frequency of the base. As shown in the graph, the gravitational position of the mass member is also one of important parameters deciding the resonance point.

Next, a rotary deflector of a third embodiment will be explained.

As shown in FIGs. 25 and 26, a sheet-like foaming sponge 98 is pasted as an elastic member on the both faces of the inside of the rib 84 and the hook 80A of the mass member 80 is positioned in the foaming sponge 98. It has been confirmed that when the hook 80A is pressed lightly or strongly against the foaming sponge 98 as

which are delineated by the following claims.

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